

## “The Upside down kingdom” Mark 10

Proposition: we so easily become ‘just like’ everyone else in our culture without even knowing it. In this chapter Jesus gives us 5 paradox’s. 5 ways of Kingdom living which can make us stand out and really make a difference.

A man and his son are out driving in the car when there is a terrible car crash. Dad is killed instantly. The son is horribly injured and needs major surgery. As the son is wheeled into the operation theatre, the surgeon says, “I cannot operate on him, he’s my son.” How could that be?

Tell the person sitting beside you your answer.

It looks like a paradox. But when you dig a bit deeper and realize that the surgeon is his mother, it all makes sense. Problem being we naturally assume that most surgeons are men. And it’s the assumption that causes us to miss the point.

Jesus is the greatest teacher that ever lived. A master teacher. He used so many techniques for teaching. He taught in parables or proverbs or gave direct instructions and sometimes one of His techniques for teaching was to teach in paradoxes. A paradox is something that initially seems impossible, it seems to be a contradiction, but when you dig a little deeper, it makes sense and it becomes very memorable.

When I was a young man there was a book I read called the ‘upside down kingdom’. Man that stuck in my thinking. The upside down kingdom. The way that God wants us to see things and value things is upside down compared to what our culture says about these things.

In this amazing chapter this morning. Mark 10 Jesus gives us 5 paradox’s. 5 ways that His kids are to live which seem back to front, upside down and yet are profoundly helpful.

***10 After Jesus left, he went to Judea and then on to the other side of the Jordan River. Once again large crowds came to him, and as usual, he taught them.***

***<sup>2</sup> Some Pharisees wanted to test Jesus. So they came up to him and asked if it was right for a man to divorce his wife. <sup>3</sup> Jesus asked them, “What does the Law of Moses say about that?”***

***<sup>4</sup> They answered, “Moses allows a man to write out divorce papers and send his wife away.”***

Wherever Jesus went, He would start teaching, teaching about the Kingdom of God and how to live in that kingdom.

Faith, Paul says, comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God.

He teaching and as He is doing so and the crowds are growing the Pharisees come to Jesus, trying to trick Him with the most theologically controversial issue of that day.

Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

Back in that day there were basically two schools of thoughts.

There were two great Rabbi's with opposing teaching on this topic.

There controversy, their argument was based around Deuteronomy 24 where it gives the basis for a man to divorce his wife 'uncleanness.'

Helel said that 'uncleanness' meant anything that you see in your wife that you don't like. That thing, that you don't like makes her unclean.

He even went onto say that if she puts too much salt or pepper on your eggs and it makes you angry, because she is the source or the cause of your anger, she is unclean and you can divorce her.

He even went on to declare that you can divorce your wife for being unclean if you saw another woman who was more clean and therefore by comparison, your wife was unclean.

Divorce in that day was rampant.

The opposing Rabbi, Shamii understood that unclean to mean immoral.

Neither Helel or Shamii thought 'unclean' to mean adultery. Because Leviticus 20:10; Deut 22:22; and John 8:1-11 says that the punishment for adultery is death.

Helel said that if your wife bugs you, you can divorce her so that she doesn't have to live a life of misery or neglect.

In the world, at that time, only men could divorce their spouse. It never occurred to anyone that it might be the other way around ie a woman might divorce her husband.

Divorce was so common, and no one wanted the courts clogged up with divorce proceedings that a man could simply say to his wife; "I divorce you 3x" then go to the his Rabbi and ask for a letter of divorce and it would be all over.

So in this culture were divorce was rampant and a great topic of controversy they come to Jesus and try to get Him roped into this controversy about divorce and remarriage.

What did Moses say, Jesus asked them.

They said, well Moses said we can get divorced.

Then Jesus says something profound.

***<sup>5</sup> Jesus replied, "Moses gave you this law because you are so heartless.***

The Greek word there that we translate heartless is ‘Sclerosis’. Moses allowed you to divorce because you have sclerosis of the heart.

Please understand that this is why Moses allowed divorce in the book of Deuteronomy, because of the hardness of men’s hearts.

Sclerosis of the heart is not a reason for divorce, it’s a revelation about divorce.

When two people divorce, some one has sclerosis of the heart.

So God allowed divorce because of sclerosis of the heart but that is not the model He gave us, it was not His plan A, it was never His goal for any marriage.

The creation account models what marriage is meant to be like.

***<sup>6</sup> But in the beginning God made a man and a woman. <sup>7</sup> That’s why a man leaves his father and mother and gets married. <sup>8</sup> He becomes like one person with his wife. Then they are no longer two people, but one. <sup>9</sup> And no one should separate a couple that God has joined together.”***

You leave the emotional and financial dependence you had with your parents, and you cleave to your wife and form an new family unit, where now you get your support first and foremost from your spouse.

If you don’t do the leaving well, if you keep running back to mummy or daddy, then be assured, your spouse will get really angry and there will not be a whole lot of cleaving going on.

1. Paradox number 1: The Two shall become One

***<sup>10</sup> When Jesus and his disciples were back in the house, they asked him about what he had said. <sup>11</sup> He told them, “A man who divorces his wife and marries someone else is unfaithful to his wife. <sup>12</sup> A woman who divorces her husband<sup>[a]</sup> and marries again is also unfaithful.”***

Two things I want you to notice.

Firstly the shock. Did you notice? In a world where no one ever considered that a woman, could divorce a man , Jesus talks about what happens if a woman divorces her husband.

If he divorces her or she divorces him and the divorcee remarries that person commits adultery.

Notice, that this doesn’t say that if a person remarries that they will be ‘living’ in adultery. What Jesus says here is that if they remarry there will be an ‘act’ of adultery. In other words this is very much plan B.

Divorce is not the unforgiveable sin but it should be avoided energetically, its not God’s best, not God’s model. It happens because someone got Sclerosis of the heart.

Vss 13-16 The second Paradox

## **2. Grown-ups should be like children**

Not to be childish but to be child like.

Just a note before I read the text, the word we interpret 'they' here is masculine, that is it's the dad's who are bringing the children to Jesus so that He can bless them.

***<sup>13</sup> Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them by placing his hands on them. But his disciples told the people to stop bothering him.***

***<sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he became angry and said, "Let the children come to me! Don't try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the kingdom of God."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> I promise you that you cannot get into God's kingdom, unless you accept it the way a child does."<sup>16</sup> Then Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them by placing his hands on them.***

When the disciples try to stop the dad's bringing their children to Jesus, Jesus became indignant, angry. And so Jesus takes the children in His arms and blesses them and says, this is the way of the kingdom.

You cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless you become as a little child!  
Children are trusting.

Juliette and I have at times lived on very, very little. There have been hard times and yet... none of my three children, now adults or none of my grandchildren have ever come to the table and wondered if they would get fed today. None of them ever asked, will we have food and clothes and shelter next week. They just trusted Juliette and I.

I also think that children have the ability not to overthink things, and if you give them a cardboard box or a beach to play on they are as happy as.

We often think that we have got to be able to explain everything, we have to get the finer points of our theology just right and yet .. I think that the Lord just loves it when we just enjoy Him, count our blessings and trust Him.

My children knew that I would provide for them and never give up on them and that I wanted good for them. How much more is our Father in heaven committed to taking care of us?

Jesus said as you come into His kingdom, its really important that you come like a little child, just trusting, believing and enjoying.

## **3. Paradox number 3: The Rich shall become Poor**

***<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was walking down a road, a man ran up to him. He knelt down, and asked, "Good teacher, what can I do to have eternal life?"***

In Matthew 19 we learn that tis man was young.

In Luke 18 we learn that he was a ruler or a business owner.

Mark tells us that he was rich.

So this guy has youth, wealth, and influence, just the kinds of things that most people look to for significance and yet he is empty, he is searching and he comes to Jesus and asks about how to have eternal life.

Scholars tell us that the life he was asking about was not just about eternity but living a life of purpose and meaning now.

***<sup>18</sup> Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments. 'Do not murder. Be faithful in marriage. Do not steal. Do not tell lies about others. Do not cheat. Respect your father and mother.'"***

***<sup>20</sup> The man answered, "Teacher, I have obeyed all these commandments since I was a young man.***

***<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked closely at the man. He liked him ....***

This guy, this guy ... would be welcome at our men's groups. Wow. He is a man of impeccable morals, a man of integrity, a sterling character.

And when he claims to have kept all these commandments, Jesus doesn't go "oh yeh right.." "really" "No you haven't"

Jesus just liked him. But he had one problem, this guy of great character who had everything that most young adults dream of.. he had an issue with money. His attitude to his money was controlling him and dominating his life.

***He liked him and said, "There's one thing you still need to do. Go sell everything you own. Give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come with me."***

This young guy had not found the meaning in life in his executive job, in being young and healthy, in being rich. What should I do he asks Jesus and Jesus says Go shed your wealth.

Now Jesus is not anti-rich people but if you lean on your wealth to solve your problems, if you get your security from your wealth, if you get your identity from your wealth, then it's a real problem to you and you entering in and living in the kingdom.

It was a real problem for this guy and one he was not willing to put aside.

Interesting thought, I don't think if this young ruler had of changed his priorities from money to God that Jesus would have made him give away all his wealth.

What you do with your finance says a lot about your faith and your heart, it reveals what you really believe. And if you are trusting in money and not God, you have a huge problem.

The Rich shall be poor.

Now if it was not possible for this upstanding man to become a follower of God's then can anyone.

And Jesus says, with God, all things are possible.

Paradox 4.

#### **4. The first shall be last**

***<sup>31</sup> But many who are now first will be last, and many who are now last will be first.***

There are many people in this world that look insignificant. They are not rich. They are not famous. No one picks them for their A team. Some of them are mum's and dads who faithfully instruct their children in the things of God. Some of them are teachers and youth workers and medical professionals who speak life and truth into the lives of others. Some of them are loving their spouses and not getting much in return. Some of them are Sunday school teachers, some are missionaries and aid workers. They serve others and they speak about Jesus but there is nothing about them that would draw your attention to them. They may never make the news at 6pm, they may never be written about in Time Magazine. They seem like the last. But ... when they get to heaven and rewards are given out, when they get to heaven and those that have shared their faith verbally will shine like stars in eternity... down here they seem like the last, but when we get home, wow, they will be in the front row and honoured by God.

#### **5. The Greatest among us will be Servants/ slaves**

***<sup>42</sup> But Jesus called the disciples together and said:***

***You know that those foreigners who call themselves kings like to order their people around. And their great leaders have full power over the people they rule. <sup>43</sup> But don't act like them. If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. <sup>44</sup> And if you want to be first, you must be everyone's slave. <sup>45</sup> The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue<sup>[h]</sup> many people.***

James and John, two disciples who were to drink the cup of Jesus' suffering later in life were trying to score benefits in Jesus' kingdom ahead of the others, they were trying to position themselves ahead of the pack on the right and left of Jesus in heaven. To them it seems that greatness was all about power and authority. But Jesus said, actually in my kingdom the Greatest among us will be the servants or slaves of others. That's a paradox!

In His kingdom, greatness, will be measured not by how much recognition you get or how much thanks you get but by how much you serve other people.

In fact I would suggest to you that if you wanted to test yourself, along Jesus' guidelines and ask yourself, am I becoming a great person in God's kingdom or not? The question would be really easy to answer. You see if you are working hard and feel like you are slaving for others and no one is noticing you and no one is thanking you and its ticking you off, and you feel unvalued and unappreciated, guess what. You are not a great person yet.

But if you are working hard, not caring if anyone notices, not looking for any thanks or recognition, you are just serving and slaving and no one is really noticing you or thanking you. Guess what? You are becoming a great person. Jesus calls us to die to self and live for Him and I think that looks like not worrying what others think about you. It looks like not taking offence easily. It looks like living in such a servant, slave like way that God gets the glory and you almost go unnoticed.

Family, we don't want to be normal, nice kiwi's.

We have been adopted into His kingdom and in His kingdom.

The two become one and the marriage relationship begins to model something of the Godhead.

In His kingdom, Grown-ups are like children, in the way they just trust the Lord and enjoy the Lord daily.

In His kingdom, the Rich shall become Poor, not bankrupt and needy but content and happy and generous, living in such a way that their significance and their security come from Jesus and not money.

In His kingdom, the first shall be last. And we know that those that serve humbly and faithfully here and appear to get little recognition or reward are going to be blessed profoundly, honoured beautifully in heaven for eternity.

In His kingdom, the issue isn't power and authority over people. In His kingdom the greatest among us will be slaving away happily, serving humbly, going unnoticed, un-thanked, unrecognised. Serving others and the Lord in such a way that God will get the glory.

We don't want to be normal people living normal lives.

God invites us this week, to live the paradox's. To live in the upside down kingdom, in your marriage, in your attitude to Him, in your attitude to finance, in your attitude to rewards, in your attitude to others.

Which one of these areas is God speaking to you about?

Go into this week and be different, be countercultural, be a child of the King.